

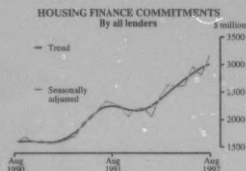
Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 22 October 1992

The week in statistics ...

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Home lending growth eases slightly in August



Trend growth in housing finance commitments eased slightly again in August, but still recorded a healthy 2.4 per cent increase in value over July.

All measures of housing finance (trend, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted) put the August 1992 figure about one-third higher than the August 1991 estimates.

The provisional trend estimate of finance committed to individuals in August was \$3,014.3 million, an increase of \$71.1 million over July 1992 and an increase of \$762.3 million (33.8%) over August 1991.

The August increase in the trend estimate was lower than that in July, continuing a pattern of slower growth over recent months.

The value of commitments for the construction of dwellings and purchase of established dwellings increased in line with the overall trend, while commitments for the purchase of newly erected dwellings fell slightly, by 0.1 per cent.

In seasonally adjusted terms there was a strong rise in home lending, totalling \$3,160.1 million in August 1992. This was an increase of \$361.5 million (12.9%) over July 1992 and \$856.0 million (33.8%) over August 1991.

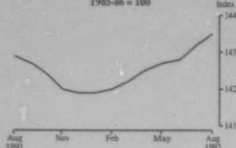
HOME FINANCE COMMITMENTS
AUGUST 1992
Value of commitments

	Established dwellings	Construction of dwellings	Purchase of newly erected dwellings	
Change from July 1992				
Trend	0.4	-1.2	-9.2	
Seasonally adjusted	14.1	13.5	-3.9	
Unadjusted	2.6	2.3	-0.1	
Change from August 1991				
Trend	35.5	33.7	9.8	33.6
Seasonally adjusted	38.5	38.1	17.1	37.7
Unadjusted	33.4	36.6	32.5	35.5

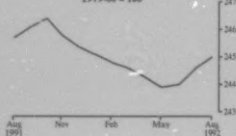
The provisional trend estimates show that the number of dwellings for which finance was committed was 37,926 in August, up 1.7 per cent on July and 24.2 per cent on August 1991.

For further information, order the publication *Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia* (5609.0), or contact John Carson on (06) 252 7110 or Harry Wilson on (06) 252 6170.

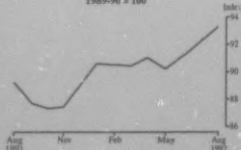
PRICES OF HOUSE BUILDING MATERIALS
1985-86 = 100



PRICES OF NON-DWELLING
BUILDING MATERIALS
1979-80 = 100



EXPORT PRICES
1989-90 = 100



Building materials up slightly

Prices of building materials increased by 0.2 per cent in August 1992, with materials used in both housing and other forms of building recording the same increase.

The main price increases were for ready mixed concrete and electrical cable.

The August 1992 prices of materials used in house building were 0.4 per cent higher than in August 1991, while those of materials used in other forms of building were 0.3 per cent lower than in August 1991.

PRICES OF BUILDING MATERIALS, AUGUST 1992
Percentage change

	House building		Other than house building	
	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Sydney	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1
Melbourne	0.4	-0.2	0.5	-1.1
Brisbane	0.3	1.9	0.0	1.2
Adelaide	0.2	-1.6	0.2	-1.7
Perth	-0.2	0.9	0.0	0.1
Hobart	-0.1	1.9	-0.3	1.1
Weighted average of six State capitals	0.2	0.4	0.2	-0.3
Darwin	— Not available —		0.1	1.4
Canberra	0.2	1.6	0.6	0.3

For further information, order the publications *Price Index of Materials Used in House Building*, *Six State Capital Cities and Canberra (6408.0)* and *Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building*, *Eight Capital Cities (6407.0)*, or contact Mark Dickson (06) 252 6198.

Export prices rise

Export prices rose by 1.1 per cent between July and August 1992.

A general factor contributing to the increase was the fall in the value of the Australian dollar against the currencies of our major trading partners.

Price increases were recorded for about half of the items in the index, the main contributors being coal, wheat and iron ore.

These increases were partially offset by small price falls for about a quarter of the items in the index. The only significant decreases recorded were for wool and refined petroleum products.

On an annual basis, export prices rose by 4.6 per cent between August 1991 and August 1992 — the largest annual increase recorded since March 1990.

Continued ...

The wide range of price changes for different commodities is shown below.

EXPORT PRICES, AUGUST 1992
Percentage change

Commodity	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Vegetable products	3.1	22.3
Prepared food stuffs	0.9	8.1
Gold, diamonds and coin	-0.5	8.0
Live animals and animal products	2.3	7.4
Mineral products	1.6	4.9
Machinery and appliances	1.8	4.9
Base metals	1.9	3.9
Motor vehicles, aircraft and vessels	0.5	1.7
Products of chemicals and allied industries	1.7	-4.3
Wool and cotton fibres	-4.1	-8.2
All exports	1.1	4.6

For further information, order the publication *Export Price Index, Australia (6405.0)*, or contact Peter Cordy on (06) 252 5541.

Australia's changing dietary habits

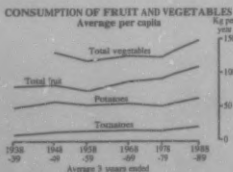
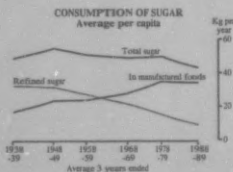
Australians are eating far more vegetables, rice and breakfast foods than they were in the mid-1980s while consumption of eggs and egg products, oils and fats and sugar have all shown a steady decline.

Meanwhile the consumption of beef — the largest component of our meat diet — remained steady at just under 40 kg per person in the five years to 1989-90. Pigmeat consumption rose by about 12 per cent to 18.4 kg per person, while lamb fell back a little to 14.8 kg per person. The sharp rise in our taste for chicken in the 1970s and early 1980s appears to have levelled off, with a little over 24 kg per head being eaten in both 1988-89 and 1989-90.

These are among the findings included in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' report *Apparent Consumption of Foodstuffs and Nutrients*, which provides short, medium and long-term perspectives on the changing dietary habits of the Australian population.

Among vegetables, the most spectacular long-term movement has been in tomatoes. In 1989-90, average consumption of tomatoes in Australia was 23.7 kg, more than 12 per cent up on the previous year and double the amount consumed 40 years earlier.

Analysis suggests that the greater availability of tomatoes in the southern States during winter, and more recently, higher imports of canned tomatoes, are factors in this big increase.



Virtually all types of vegetables shared in the medium-term growth between 1984-85 and 1988-89, with total vegetable consumption rising 13.5 per cent over that period to a record 161.6 kg per head.

PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF SELECTED FOODSTUFFS

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Eggs and egg products (no.)	143	140	138	135	128	125
Oils and fats (kg)	21.0	20.9	20.6	20.4	20.2	19.9
Sugar (kg)	49.1	49.9	48.9	47.5	48.3	48.2

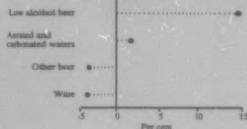
In the medium term, consumption of breakfast cereals, at 10.4 kg per person in 1989-90, was 17 per cent higher than it was in 1984-85, while table rice consumption rose more than 50 per cent to 5.8 kg.

In the 50 years since 1938-39, the overall consumption of grain products has remained virtually stable, but within that total, consumption of flour has decreased by 13 per cent while consumption of breakfast foods has increased by 117 per cent.

Consumption of beer continued its slow long-term decline to reach 111.6 litres per person in 1989-90, with the low alcohol version continuing to increase its share of total consumption with a record 18.4 litres per person.

For further information, order the publication *Apparent Consumption of Foodstuffs and Nutrients, Australia (4306.0)*, or contact Joanne Gibbons on (06) 252 5329.

PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF BEVERAGES 1989-90
Percentage change



Migrants in Australia's workforce

A research project undertaken by an officer of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has thrown new light on the difficulties faced by migrants in finding jobs suitable to their qualifications.

The research suggests that misconceptions among Australian employers, as well as the economic imperatives faced by newly arrived immigrants, contribute to the disparity in workforce attainment between migrants and Australian-born employees.

It also confirms that the ability to speak English well, and to a lesser extent age at immigration, are important factors in the workforce experience of most groups of immigrants.

The research was conducted by Dr Graeme Vaughan, as a Research Statistician with the ABS. The results have now been published in the occasional paper *Birthplace Differences in Occupational Attainment*. (The conclusions of a paper produced from this project by Dr Vaughan, *Sex Differences in Occupational Attainment* were outlined in the 15 October issue of *Statistics Weekly*).

Analysing data from the 1986 Census, Dr Vaughan found that the differences in occupational attainment between the overseas-born and the Australian-born were largely the product of difficulties in transferring 'human capital characteristics' to the Australian labour market. (Human capital characteristics are essentially education and labour force experience).

Continued ...

Inquiries

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Tas. (002) 20 5800
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The paper reports that the problem of non-transferability is not confined to Southern European migrants who, ahead of Asians and some other people from non-English speaking backgrounds, suffer the most obvious attainment disparities in the workforce.

The paper's findings suggest that in the Australian labour market there is a general discounting of both overseas education and overseas work experience, and postulates two plausible explanations.

On one hand, migrants themselves, anxious to find work quickly for economic reasons and not knowing a lot about the Australian job market, may accept jobs at lower skill levels than their education and experience would indicate, and become locked in to that employment pattern.

On the other hand employers, for reasons ranging from ignorance of foreign educational and work practice standards to a desire to 'play it safe', may regard overseas education, training and experience as less relevant to Australian occupations as the Australian equivalents.

The study concludes that the complex task of matching the work skills of adult migrants with the skill-based gaps in the Australian workforce 'is not being achieved with sufficient success to ensure that occupational differences between the Australian-born and immigrant groups are minimized'.

For further information, order the publication *Occasional Paper: Census 86 — Birthplace Differences in Occupational Attainment* (6282.0) or contact *Melanie Short* on (06) 252 6111.

All the week's releases: 14 to 20 October

General

Publications Issued in September 1992 (1102.0; \$6.00)
Pocket Year Book, Aust., 1992 (1302.0; \$7.50)
Monthly Summary of Statistics, Aust., October 1992 (1304.0; \$20.00)
Statistics Weekly, 15 October 1992 (1318.0; \$4.20)
Economic Indicators, Qld, October 1992 (1307.3; \$6.50)
Northern Territory Business Indicators, October 1992 (1307.7; \$5.00)

Demography

Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Aust., June Qtr 1992 (3402.0; \$14.00)

National accounts, finance and foreign trade

Expenditure on Education, Aust., 1989-90 (5510.0; \$10.50)
Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Aust., August 1992 (5609.0; \$10.50)
Commercial Finance, Aust., July 1992 (5643.0; \$6.00)
Assets of Superannuation Funds and Approved Deposit Funds, June Qtr 1992 (5656.0; \$10.50)

Labour statistics and prices

Export Price Index, Aust., August 1992 (6405.0; \$8.00)
Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities, August 1992 (6407.0; \$10.50)
Price Index of Materials Used in House Building, Six State Capital Cities and Canberra, August 1992 (6408.0; \$8.00)
Price Indexes of Copper Materials, Aust., September 1992 (6410.0; \$5.50)

Continued ...

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Suggestions

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

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(06) 252 6104

Manufacturing, Mining, Energy, Service Industries, Building and Construction

Electricity and Gas Operations, Aust., 1990-91 (\$208.0; \$10.50)
Manufacturing Production, Aust.: Energy Products, August 1992 (\$368.0; \$6.00)

Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, NSW, June 1992 (\$741.1; \$10.50)

Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Qld, June 1992 (\$741.3; \$10.50)

Building Activity, Qld, June Qtr 1992 (\$752.3; \$10.50)

Building Approvals — Private Sector, Perth Statistical Division, September 1992 (\$732.5; \$5.00)

Building Activity, WA, June Qtr 1992 (\$752.5; \$10.50)

Building Activity, ACT, June Qtr 1992 (\$752.8; \$10.50)

Calendar of key releases

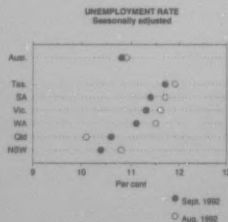
Expected releases over the fortnight to 3 November 1992

October

- 21** Price Indexes of Articles Produced by Manufacturing Industry, Australia, August 1992 (6412.0; \$10.50)
- 22** Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Australia, August 1992 (6411.0; \$10.50)
Import Price Index, Australia, August 1992 (6414.0; \$8.00)
- 26** Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Australia, September 1992, Preliminary (9301.0; \$10.50)
- 27** Manufacturing Production, Australia, September 1992, Preliminary (8301.0; \$10.50)
- 28** Consumer Price Index, September Quarter 1992 (6401.0; \$11.50)
- 30** Balance of Payments, Australia, September 1992 (5301.0; \$16.00)

The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to
20 October 1992



Statistics Weekly
22 October 1992

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
— Percentage change from same period previous year —									
New capital expenditure (Mar. qtr 92) [†]	-33.1	-21.8	-18.4	-24.7	-1.5	5.7	n.a.	n.a.	-22.8
Retail turnover (Aug. 92) (trend estimate)	3.6	2.9	6.9	-3.6	6.5	6.0	n.a.	4.5	3.9
New motor vehicle registrations (Aug. 92) [†]	-0.3	24.8	20.1	2.2	16.8	8.0	16.9	-33.3	10.2
Number of dwelling unit approvals (Aug. 92) [†]	2.0	22.8	22.6	-2.2	21.5	-6.4	11.9	47.4	18.0
Value of total building work done (June qtr 92)	-18.2	-7.1	6.2	-12.9	-5.8	19.5	-10.3	3.9	-8.8
Employed persons (Sept. 92) [*]	-0.3	-1.8	2.7	0.5	0.9	-2.9	-2.1	1.3	-0.1
Capital city consumer price index (June qtr 92)	1.0	1.3	1.2	2.0	0.5	1.1	1.7	2.2	1.2
Average weekly earnings (full-time adult ordinary time) (May 92)	7.5	3.3	1.6	6.0	3.7	4.3	6.3	6.3	4.7
Population (June 91)	1.3	1.1	2.2	1.2	2.0	0.9	1.0	2.9	1.5
Room nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc. (Mar. qtr 92)	1.7	4.4	8.0	0.5	5.1	-0.7	14.6	2.4	4.0

* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas., NT and ACT.

Key national indicators – consolidated to 20 October 1992

		Period	Latest figure available		Percentage change (a) on	
			Original	Seasonally adjusted	Previous period	Corresponding period last year
National production						
Gross domestic product (A) — 1984-85 prices	\$m	June qtr 92	n.a.	65,000	0.6	1.6
Industrial activity						
New capital expenditure — current prices	\$m	June qtr 92	5,749	5,511	0.7	-15.4
— 1984-85 prices	"	"	4,604	4,407	2.0	-12.0
Expected new capital expenditure	"	Six months to Dec. 92	12,157	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Retail turnover — current prices	"	July 92	7,861	7,973	0.6	4.0
— 1984-85 prices	"	June qtr 92	15,253	15,785	1.6	4.9
New motor vehicle registrations	no.	Aug. 92	44,554	45,363	4.7	10.2
Dwelling unit approvals	"	Aug. 92	13,528	13,374	-3.4	14.1
Value of all building approvals	\$m	"	1,762	1,782	-4.1	2.6
Value of total building work done — current prices	"	June qtr 92	5,778.2	5,795.0	-0.4	-8.8
— 1984-85 prices	"	"	3,754.4	3,765.4	-0.3	-6.8
Manufacturers' sales — current prices	"	June qtr 92	35,443	35,599	1.1	3.8
— 1984-85 prices	"	"	24,478	24,601	1.2	3.1
Expected manufacturers' sales	"	Six months to Dec. 92	73,674	n.a.	n.a.	2.3
Labour						
Employed persons	'000	Sept. 92	7,759.9	7,687.7	-0.6	-0.1
Unemployment rate †	%	"	10.7	10.8	-0.1	0.6
Participation rate †	"	"	63.2	62.7	-0.5	-0.6
Job vacancies	'000	Aug. 92	28.0	27.5	10.9	9.6
Average weekly overtime per employee	hours	"	1.07	1.11	0.9	0.0
Prices, profits and wages						
Consumer price index	1989-90 = 100.0	June qtr 92	107.3	n.a.	-0.3	1.2
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries (f)	1984-85 = 100.0	July 92	126.2	n.a.	1.3	4.8
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry (e)	1988-89 = 100.0	July 92	113.2	n.a.	0.4	1.6
Company profits before income tax	\$m	June qtr 92	3,133	3,426	-4.6	45.0
Average weekly earnings (Full-time adult; ordinary time)	\$	May 92	587.30	n.a.	-0.3	4.7
Interest rates (b) (monthly average)						
90-day bank bills †	% per annum	July 92	5.55	n.a.	-0.85	-4.55
10-year Treasury bonds †	"	"	8.30	n.a.	-0.60	-2.70
Balance of payments						
Exports of merchandise	\$m	Aug. 92	4,679	4,706	-2.2	1.6
Imports of merchandise	"	"	-4,525	-4,368	-11.1	15.9
Balance on merchandise trade (c)	"	"	-154	338	n.a.	-60.9
Balance of goods and services (c)	"	"	-125	110	n.a.	-84.4
Balance on current account (c)	"	"	-1,104	-903	-38.8	-61.8
Terms of trade (d)	1984-85 = 100.0	June qtr 92	n.a.	99.0	-1.2	-1.0
Foreign investment						
Net foreign debt	\$m	31 Mar. 92	148,124	n.a.	2.4	7.6
Net foreign liabilities	"	"	199,312	n.a.	3.4	10.9
Exchange rates (monthly average)						
\$US	per \$A	Aug. 92	0.7258	n.a.	-2.6	-7.2
Trade weighted index	May 1970 = 100.0	"	53.1	n.a.	-2.9	-12.1
Other indicators						
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million	Mar. 92	17.5	n.a.	0.4	1.4
Overseas visitor arrivals	'000	July 92	219	223	3.0	6.0

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures expected to be released Wednesday, 21 October 1992. (f) Later figures expected to be released Thursday, 22 October 1992.

NOTES: † = change is shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available. Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6).

Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

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